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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [EUN](#) [RU](#) [SW](#)

SUBJECT: KREMLIN COLD SHOULDER: EU-RUSSIA SUMMIT SET FOR
NOVEMBER 18, BUT NO BILAT

Classified By: PolCouns Marc Koehler for reasons 1.4 (B) & (D).

¶1. (C) Summary: Moscow finally agreed to attend the EU-Russia Summit to be hosted by the Swedish EU Presidency in Stockholm on November 18. But the Russians are still refusing a bilateral leaders' meeting between President Medvedev and PM Reinfeldt. Comment: The agreed summit date relieves some of the pressure on a strained bilateral relationship. The Swedes are still very concerned about Georgian sovereignty and are pushing Brussels to deepen its partnership with the Southern Caucasus through the Eastern Partnership. All of this is easier for Stockholm if the EU-Russia relationship can move forward a few steps. End Comment.

¶2. (C) The Swedes have been waiting for Moscow to agree to dates for the EU-Russia Summit, to be hosted by the Swedish EU Presidency in Stockholm, for over six months. Swedish FM Bildt's strong criticism of Russia after its invasion of Georgia, and Sweden's ongoing criticisms of human rights violations in Russia, resulted in a cold Kremlin shoulder: Bildt twice traveled to Russia in the past year but was denied official meetings. The Swedes played all of this down in public, and with regards to the summit simply cited "scheduling conflicts" in public statements. But off the record, an unnamed Swedish official was cited in the press in July as saying that President Medvedev "does not want the EU-Russia summit to take place in the Swedish capital and insists that it takes place in Brussels, which Moscow considers more neutral."

¶3. (C) On September 21, the Swedish EU Presidency website finally listed an EU-Russia Summit with a date of November ¶18. MFA Russia Desk Officer Marten Ehnberg told Poloff September 23 that the Russians never refused a summit, but had just taken a "rather late" decision -- earlier in the process, he asserted, than under the Czech Presidency. He acknowledged earlier "rumors" that Moscow was only willing to attend the summit if it were held in Brussels. But FM Bildt would never agree to that, MFA Political Director Bjorn Lyrvall told POL Counselor and five other non-EU heads of mission in a September 4 meeting; the summit would be in Stockholm or not at all.

¶4. (C) Sweden was pleased that the date was now set, Prime Minister Reinfeldt's State Secretary H.G. Wessberg told the Ambassador on September 23. However, the Russians are still refusing to meet bilaterally with their Swedish hosts on the margins of the EU-Russia Summit. A bilateral leaders' meeting is a regular feature of all EU Summits with other countries, he continued, so it would be exceptional if it did not, in the end, also take place with the Russians.

¶5. (C) Comment: The Swedes probably welcome the summit as an opportunity to manage their relations with Moscow through the EU, relieving some of the pressure on a bilateral relationship that has been strained since August 2008. FM Bildt has not lessened his criticism of Russia, however, though he has made it less public. The Swedes are still very much concerned about Georgian sovereignty and continue to

organize private, multilateral meetings. As Stockholm pushes Brussels to deepen its partnership with the Southern Caucasus (through the Eastern Partnership), it helps that the EU-Russia relationship can move forward a few steps.
BARZUN